



March 2, 2016

To Senator Edwin A. Gomes, Representative Peter A. Tercyak and
Members of the General Assembly Committee on Labor and Public
Employees:

The Connecticut Center for a New Economy supports the Better Jobs
Act, **Bill 5371**, AN ACT CONCERNING A MINIMUM WORK WEEK FOR PERSONS PERFORMING
BUILDING MAINTENANCE SERVICES.

In Connecticut the median household net worth for white families is more than sixty times higher than that for families of color (Corporation for Enterprise Development, 2009-2010 Assets & Opportunity Scorecard). This extreme racial wealth divide became more severe during the recent economic recession, when families of color were more likely to lose their homes, their primary asset, to foreclosure than white families. In addition, median household income for white families in Connecticut is nearly double that for African American and Latino families (Source: U.S. Census ACS 2014). Most people who perform building service work in Connecticut, and who face the double difficulty of low wages and too few work hours are people of color. One way, therefore, to start to address the racial disparity in access to economic opportunity in Connecticut is to pass Bill 5371.

We almost take for granted in this state that people who clean buildings will work two or three jobs. We seldom stop to recognize, however, the toll on families and communities when work is organized this way. We don't recognize that those with the lowest wages have the highest transportation costs, spend the most time commuting, are the least likely to qualify for employer-sponsored benefits (because they meet no single employer's hour threshold nor the ACA threshold), are the most vulnerable to termination and, most important, are the least likely to be able to be reliably present for their children. Building janitors, maintenance and security workers are expected to show up to clean buildings at times least compatible with public transportation schedules for limited hours of work and low wages.

According to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women 2015 Self-Sufficiency Standard, a family of four living in Bridgeport needs to earn \$33.14 per hour just to make ends meet without public assistance. In New Britain it takes an hourly wage of \$36.36 for this family to get by. Janitors earning Connecticut's standard wage would need to work 108 hours a week to take care of that family of 4. Passing Bill No. 5371 will help to stabilize families and communities. Though it doesn't eliminate all of the root causes of poverty, it eliminates one of them.

Submitted by Renae Reese, Executive Director, CCNE, 860-280-7320,
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The Connecticut Center for a New Economy (CCNE) promotes economic, social and racial justice for Connecticut's unemployed and working people.